

Job Interviews

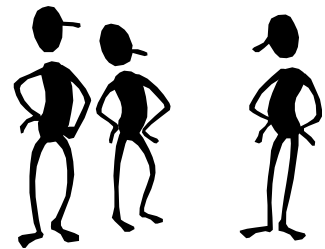


If you don't know exactly what you are looking for, you'll probably never find it. The ability to do an effective job interview is possessing knowledge and understanding of the job duties, skills, experience and aptitude that are necessary to perform the job well. The total cost of a poor hiring decision is more than lost time and money...it also includes low efficiency, poor morale, high absenteeism and frequent turnover.

Interview Preparation

Review your job description and extract 6-10 major tasks of the job. From these major tasks, identify the most important qualifications for the position and then determine how you will measure those qualifications through the interviewing process.

As appropriate, consider questions that elicit the following: motivation; related-job experience; team player; ability to learn; technical skills; attitude; availability; flexibility; ability to communicate and cooperation.



Once you have decided on 10-15 general and specific job-related questions you plan to use in the interview, transfer these questions to an interview form. This assures that all candidates are asked the same questions and provides you a means of rating candidates and taking notes.

Before interviewing—identify any problems you have had with the position and develop screening tools to address those concerns. If certain aspects of the job cause people to leave, mention them during the interview, it's better the person refuse the job than to start and quit.

Set your minimum limits, and then consider them carefully. For example: Is high school education mandatory for satisfactory completion of duties? Will you consider similar job experience or training instead?

Be sure your minimum standards are based on true need—not bias—otherwise you may lose the opportunity to hire a qualified, stable employee.

Guidelines For Interviewing



1. Determine what skills, experience and aptitude are necessary to perform the job well by referring to the job description (prepared prior to recruiting and interviewing).
2. Identify the most important qualifications from 6-10 major tasks of the position and determine how you will measure those qualifications through the interview process.
3. Develop 10-15 job-related questions to ask during the interview. Avoid any questions related to race, creed, national origin, color, sex, religion, physical or mental disability, marital status, age or political ideas (if you are a government employee).
4. Transfer these questions to an interview form. This provides a means of consistently asking the same questions of all applicants and provides space for rating candidates and taking notes.
5. Try to make the applicant comfortable in order to elicit more and better information.
6. Start with easy, non-threatening questions to put the person at ease.
7. Use open-ended questions that allow more thought and input from the applicant. Allow silence in order for the candidate to formulate an answer. Avoid prompting the applicant to the correct answer.
8. Subtly control the direction of the interview by using mirroring and rephrasing techniques. Listen at least 50 percent of the time—and look for discrepancies between words and behaviors.
9. Consider having more than one person on the interview team as this increases the chances for hiring the right person.
10. Check references and verify past employment dates of applicants.

The Interview

The interviewer's job is to maintain subtle control of the interview while:

1. eliciting the behavior that will help make a hiring decision,
2. carefully observing that behavior; and
3. interpreting how the behavior relates to the requirements of the job.

Assessing the applicant's ability to do the job is the most important objective of the interview. However, the successful interview should also give the applicant information about the job and working conditions in the company. In addition, it should create goodwill in the applicant toward the job and the company, even if the applicant is not hired.

Caution



- Interviewing is hard work! **Watch out for “halo effects.”** This happens when you make an immediate, overall judgment about an applicant which results in the applicant getting approximately the same rating score on every aspect of the interview. To avoid this, pay close attention to everything the applicant says and then make careful, independent ratings of the applicant’s response to each question.
- **Don’t dwell on the negative.** Placing greater emphasis on negative information than on positive information defeats the purpose of the interview and again can result in a snap decision or judgment.
- It is your responsibility and in your own best interest to **keep the applicant from volunteering information which has no bearing on the selection process.** If an applicant volunteers information about a spouse, kids, religion, etc., STOP the flow of information and courteously explain your reason for interrupting and assure the applicant that your company does not base its hiring practices on that particular subject area. If this person does not get the job, he/she can file a complaint saying that you learned during the interview, for example, that she was divorced and has children, and you refused to hire her for that reason. If discriminatory information is inadvertently revealed during the interview, do not tell others or enter this information anywhere on your application or evaluation forms.
- **Avoid leading questions** such as, “You left school to go to work?” It is easy for the application to answer, “Yes,” even though the real reason might have been expulsion. Rephrase the question to encourage a full explanation. For example, “Tell us why you left school.”
- **Consider having more than one person interview your applicants.** People often tend to hire people like themselves because they feel comfortable with them. In reality, businesses thrive more on diversity because different skills, ideas and points of view strengthen an organization. Another option is a "group or panel interview" in which several people interview each applicant at the same time, taking turns asking questions.
- **Be attentive and try not to show feelings to responses given, other than to acknowledge.** Try the mirror technique where you restate the last part of the answer as though it was a question (example: “And then they told you, you were fired?”). Mirroring is especially useful because it asks a question without revealing the interviewer’s bias regarding the answer. Look interested as though you would like to hear more. If that does not work, simply request more information by saying something such as, “Tell me more about” or “What happened then?” When you are unclear what the applicant is saying, try rephrasing what you think you heard to make sure communications are clear. After interviewing **BE SURE TO CHECK REFERENCES** and use any legal job-related testing you have.

TEST YOURSELF

Which of these interview questions are “suspect”?

1. What are your strengths with respect to making decisions?
2. You have an unusual name. What nationality are you?
3. Would you be willing to work for a person who is younger than you?
4. Are you physically able to do this job?
5. Describe how you would handle a complaint from an upset customer.
6. Describe your public speaking experience.
7. Are you supplementing your household income?
8. What do you know about our company?



Suspect questions are #'s 2, 3, 4, 7.